



tips: in the NICU

- 1 Babies and parents in the NICU benefit tremendously from as much skin to skin holding as possible.**
 - Skin to skin means that baby is naked except for a diaper and held vertically on the naked chest of a parent.
 - This is possible and beneficial for almost all babies in the NICU including the youngest premature infants.
 - Advocate by telling the NICU doctors and nurses your need to hold your baby skin to skin as much as possible. When parents are resting, other adults like family members or friends can hold baby skin to skin.
 - Advocate to hold your baby skin to skin (with breastfeeding / chestfeeding if available) for all painful medical procedures.
- 2 Babies in the NICU benefit from reduced sensory input.**
 - Advocate by communicating your need for dim lights, quiet voices, muting of unnecessary beeping or loud sounds.
- 3 Babies benefit from drinking human milk in the NICU.**
 - If your goals are to breastfeed / chestfeed or pump milk from your body find an IBCLC to support your feeding in and out of the hospital.
 - If breastfeeding / chestfeeding is possible - advocate to breastfeed / chestfeed your baby as much as possible. This is possible and beneficial for almost all babies in the NICU including the youngest premature babies.
 - If pumping milk is possible – advocate to feed baby pumped milk as much as possible.
 - If you are not producing milk – advocate for your baby to receive human milk from a milk bank or from a milk donor.
- 4 Babies benefit from your smell when you are resting.**
 - When you are resting out of the NICU leave your scent with baby. You can leave behind a worn t-shirt, you can put a baby blanket on your skin and wrap baby in it when you leave, if breastfeeding / chestfeeding you can put your milk on baby's sheets or their hat so they can smell it.
 - Ask for baby to sleep on their stomach when alone. This is only safe in the NICU as babies' vitals are monitored but it is not safe to put baby on their stomach for sleep at home.
- 5 Parents benefit from meeting their needs.**
 - Make sure you have plenty of water and healthy food.
 - Rest in or out of the NICU is vital for you. If you can't sleep in the NICU go home to sleep.
 - Take your pain medication on time if applicable.

tips: when you get home from the NICU

touch:

Invest in a stretchy newborn wrap and wear baby skin to skin as much as possible. Hold baby for naps. Hold baby as much as possible. Can be done by parents, family and friends.

feed:

Feed baby on cue. Continue your support with an IBCLC if breastfeeding / chestfeeding. Learn paced bottle feeding if using a bottle.

sleep:

Set up a safe sleeping surface right next to your bed, as close to you as possible where baby can hear your breathing and smell you. Allow baby to sleep on cue, whenever they are tired. Find resources and support for normal infant sleep (see www.nurture-neuroscience.com/network).

play:

When baby is alert and awake, hold them close and speak to them, repeat their sounds, make faces, copy the faces they make. When they look away give them a break, they will look back when they are ready to play again.

environment:

Use minimal beauty products and choose unscented products so baby can smell you, remove any artificial scents from the home.

To view or share scientific research to support these notions, search Nils Bergman on pubmed.gov or [click here](#).